

withheld* The Prime Minister was prepared to pay the price, for the danger from Germany was growing from day to day. A fresh opportunity presented itself from the Italian side early in 1935 when Mr. Eden and Count Grandi had some amicable conversations. On February 10, the Ambassador announced that they had been sincerely welcomed in Rome, and that the Duce was ready for discussion at any time, as wide as possible, including the recognition of Abyssinia. Mr. Eden replied that we were bound to act as loyal members of the League, and that the attitude of the League and the Mediterranean Powers would be affected by an Anglo-Italian agreement. A week later Grandi was instructed to urge an early start. Chamberlain suggested to Mr. Eden that they should see him together, and the Foreign Secretary begged his chief not to commit the Government to anything specific. The advice was accepted, but after the talk the two men disagreed. The Prime Minister argued that a rebuff would confirm the suspicion that we did not want conversations to start and might make war inevitable. Moreover they would probably improve the atmosphere in Spain and elsewhere. The Foreign Secretary, on the other hand, wished to defer the official opening till volunteers in substantial numbers were withdrawn from Spain. The Cabinet sided with the Prime Minister and Mr. Eden resigned. He had no objection to negotiations, he explained to Parliament, for they were implicit in the Chamberlain-Mussolini letters of the preceding summer: the only question was the time and the conditions. Unfriendly propaganda continued, and no progress concerning intervention in Spain had been made. The Gentleman's Agreement of January 1937 had been, followed by the first large despatch

of troops to Spain—a breach of its spirit if not
of the letter.
The momentary improvement after the letters
in the summer
of 1937 had been followed by sinkings in the
Mediterranean.
We could not risk a repetition of these
experiences. " The
withdrawal must have begun in earnest
before those con-
versations in Rome can be held on a really
solid basis of
goodwill which is essential to success." In
view of the
increasing violation of international
agreements this was a
moment to stand firm. " There has been too
keen a desire on
our part-to make terms with others rather
than that others
should make terms with us. ... I do not believe
that we can
make progress in European appeasement if
we allow the
impression to gain ground abroad that we yield
to constant